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NEWS RELEASE

Jan. 10, 2005

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LUNCHEON TO EXPLORE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

MISSOULA —

More than 60 business and civic leaders from urban communities in Montana will join legislators and officials in a Montana on the Move meeting and luncheon in **Helena** on Tuesday, Jan. 11. The event will be held at noon in the Great Northern Hotel.

Montana on the Move is a project of The University of Montana's O'Connor Center for the Rocky Mountain West and Public Policy Research Institute.

Over the last year, meetings have been held around the state exploring economic development opportunities and needs of Montana's major cities. Economic growth and diversification in Montana are heavily concentrated in and nearby Montana's largest cities. The counties with Montana's seven largest cities, where 60 percent of Montana's population and 65 percent of statewide employment are located, accounted for nearly three-fourths of the state's employment growth in the last decade.

Montana on the Move forums have focused on identifying tools and strategies necessary to take greater advantage of these growth trends and opportunities. Recommendations from the forums will be presented to legislators during the luncheon.

State legislators, mainly from Montana's more urban areas, have been invited to the meeting. Following the luncheon and a gathering of the Montana on the Move steering committee, business and civic leaders will meet informally at the Capitol with legislators from their communities.

To date, public and private leaders in **Missoula, Great Falls, Billings, Butte** and **Kalispell** have participated in Montana on the Move forums. The events have been supported by local businesses, major employers, elected officials, economic development organizations,

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and area colleges and universities. Additional forums are being planned in **Bozeman** and **Helena**.

During the luncheon, Larry Swanson of UM's Center for the Rocky Mountain West will highlight key economic trends and opportunities in Montana. Other speakers include Gov. Brian Schweitzer; Mike Gulledge, publisher of the Billings Gazette; Daniel Kemmis, the O'Connor Center's director; Mike Kadas, mayor of Missoula; Joe Unterreiner, Kalispell Chamber of Commerce; Mary Moe, dean of Montana State University/Great Falls; Don Peoples, MERDI, Butte; and Randy Gray, mayor of Great Falls.

Montana on the Move is sponsored by the O'Connor Center and the Public Policy Research Institute at UM and the Foundation for Community Vitality. Montana on the Move community forum reports and data are available at <http://www.crmw.org/montanaonthemove>.

Luncheon schedule:

Noon -- welcoming remarks by Mike Gulledge, Billings Gazette Publisher. "Why Montana on the Move?" by Daniel Kemmis, UM Center for the Rocky Mountain West.

12:06 p.m. -- "Key Economic Trends and Opportunities" by Larry Swanson, UM Center for the Rocky Mountain West.

12:30 p.m. -- "Montana Moving Forward" by Gov. Brian Schweitzer.

12:35 p.m. -- "Positioning Montana for Greater Economic Prosperity" panel. Topics and speakers will be "Infrastructure Needs of Growing Cities," Missoula Mayor Mike Kadas; "Adapting to New Economic Development Opportunities" by Joe Unterreiner, Kalispell Chamber of Commerce; "New Imperatives for Workforce Development in Montana," Mary Moe, Montana State University-Great Falls dean; and "Seizing the Opportunity for Economic Advancement" by Great Falls Mayor Randy Gray.

12:55 p.m. -- questions and discussion.

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